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**AN EXAMINATION OF THE CHANGING CONTEXT OF WORK AND ITS
INFLUENCE ON HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN EMERGING MARKET
MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES**

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An Examination of the Changing Context of Work and its influence on Human Resource Management in Emerging Market Multinational Companies

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Abstract

In recent years there has been considerable debate about changes which have taken place in the world of work and the implications this has had for the way in which work is organised. These changes include an increasingly competitive market, growing global integration, developments in ICT, demographic changes and changing attitudes to work. Much of this debate has focused on the developed world and to date there has been little exploration of how these changes have impacted on emerging market countries. In addition to these more general changes the developing world has also experienced some changes specific to their context as governments and companies seek to establish their place in world markets. In this article we seek to address the lack of consideration of these developments to date and their consequences in emerging markets.

Using secondary data, the paper analyses factors affecting the changing nature of work and work organisation in emerging market multinational companies (EMMNC), focusing specifically on Africa. Issues of organizational culture, institutional context, changing notions of work organisation, labour markets and flexible work, human resource practices and skills capabilities are evaluated and areas for further research are identified. A key finding is that, notwithstanding rapid economic growth and increased foreign direct investment, the adoption of new forms of work organization is mediated by cultural, institutional and local labour market and labour relations contexts. The implications of these findings are discussed and six research propositions and a model of work organisation proposed for future research.

Key words: changing nature of work, work organisation, emerging market multinational companies (EMMNCs), African emerging markets, and talent management, human resource management.

Introduction

The changing nature of work in emerging markets is an important development in the context of rapid economic growth and transitional political economies. An analysis of how these shifts relate to and influence work typologies, new forms of work organisation and human resource management (HRM) is the focus of this paper. The scale of economic development in emerging market countries is evidenced by, for example, the growth of more than 1 000

firms which have with annual sales of above \$1 billion (The Economist January 19, 2013, p.68), many of whom have international operations. Changing population demography in Africa suggests that by 2050, Africa is predicted to have more than 20% of world population (UN Population Division figures, Economist 2013a)). Populous countries in Africa, and in particular those with higher levels of technological literacy such as Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, may be increasingly well placed to respond to the demand for labour on a global scale. Significant developments in the world of work over the past two decades have implications for the way in which human resource management policy and practice is organised. The purpose of this paper is to examine how these have taken place in EMMNCs with a particular focus on the African context. This exploratory analysis evaluates an evolving but somewhat thematically disparate body of literature in this latter context. It posits a set of provisional research propositions and a model is developed which seeks to provide a framework for future research in this area.

In the early part of this century Beck characterised the ‘brave new world of work’ as one which reflected increased digitalisation and individualisation of work, a new risk regime of work, with ‘spacialisation’ of work to multi-locations with virtual, flexible working by connected individuals and groups, as a new scenario of work (Beck, 2000). Global digitalisation and networked communications were according to Beck (op cit. pp.74-75) ‘aimed at an economy with a capacity to operate in real time across the planet’. This is part of a new literacy which requires a mastery of technological language – ‘technological literacy’, in order to avoid social and economic exclusion. The rapid development of the internet and social media represent what is can be considered a ‘third industrial revolution’ – following the first industrial revolution from cottage to factory industries, the second to mass production Fordist assembly line manufacturing, with command and control managerial cultures (Rifkin 2011 and 2014, Christopher 2013). Rifkin (ibid) posits that this new revolution lowers the marginal cost to society of producing and selling goods and services in order to win customers and increase market share. This new technological revolution is purported to reduce marginal costs significantly, making many goods and services cheaper and some almost free. They reflect a significant disruptive change, given more traditional forms of capitalism such as Hall and Soskice’s (2001) dichotomy of liberal and co-ordinated market economies.

More recently, in addition to developments in information and communication technologies and the impact they have had on communications, other factors have been examined as drivers for the changes that have taken place in the world of work. Kelliher and Richardson (2012: 1-6), based on empirical research, posit a typology of drivers or key variables of change in the way in which work is organised. This includes increasingly competitive market conditions, the consequences of greater global integration for businesses, shifting demographic patterns and attitudinal changes amongst employees. Increased competition has resulted in organisations seeking to manage their resources more effectively. In the case of human resources this has resulted in increased flexibility in the way in which labour is managed (e.g. use of temporary agency staff, increased part-time working and zero hours contracts). Greater global integration has resulted in changes to working time to

accommodate real time working with those in different time zones, the creation of geographically distributed virtual teams and the (re)location of production and service provision to different parts of the world. Advances in information and communication technologies have meant that for many, work can be done from almost any place and at any time, enabling more flexible work patterns and reducing the need for physical attendance at the workplace, which in turn has led to greater virtual working. At the same time population and demographic changes may mean that employers need to look at different geographical areas and segments of the workforce to meet their human resource needs. Different orientations to and expectations of work (for example Generation Y), may mean that traditional approaches to managing people have become less relevant in the modern workplace. Kelliher and Richardson (2011) also argue that as knowledge work has increased globally, it has brought with it new ways of organising work (op cit p.7).

Trends in ICT and the digital age revolution have changed the nature and consequences of globalisation and arguably the context of work in capitalist economies and their variants. It is no longer only about globalising supply chains, labour and skills mobility of expatriate workers, or capital and technology. An added factor is how disruptive new technologies such as social media, mobile phone technology Apps enhance simplicity, speed and ease of globalising, which in case examples discussed in this paper circumvent or 'jump' traditional technologies; the latter often being driven by the exigencies of local contexts. Quelch and Jocz (2012) argue that 'place matters more than ever in a global, virtual world'. They note that businesses, irrespective of size, must be local as well as global in order to succeed (op cit. p.3). Though their focus is largely on marketing, their reference to different fundamentals of place, including psychological place, physical or geographical space, virtual and global place are also pertinent for product, service and labour market mobility and adaptability. They note that competing trends include both the convergence of culture and values, and tensions between this and place where local is still as significant as the global (op cit. pp.7-8). They cite the HSBC slogan of 'the world's local bank' and McDonald's which has developed authentic, customized menus to appeal to local customers, even though the brand is a global one - they plan for example to introduce vegetarian only outlets in India. Similarly, Colgate-Palmolive adapts toothpastes to local flavors and preferences. Google, being a 'placeless firm', offers all of its products worldwide via 'the cloud', but although its products have no physical form, it has experienced political and legal difficulties in China and Germany.

Work flexibility, reorganisation, digital communication, rapid manufacturing processes, customised solutions and the 'servitization' of products are increasingly individualised as customer needs become more pre-eminent over traditional standardised products (Christopher, 2013: pp. 4-5). Similarly, standard versus tailored individual service and products underpinned by real time data analytics and multiple supply chain pipelines occurs. These developments have implications for the way in which work is managed and organised across the globe, yet much of the debate has taken place in the context of the developed world, with relatively little attention being paid to how the world of work and approaches to work organisation have changed in emerging markets. It cannot be assumed that the impact of changes experienced in the developed world will necessarily be mirrored elsewhere.

Developments in Emerging Markets

These developments are evidenced in emerging markets too. We examine their implications for work organisation and the way in which people are managed. Evidence shows that not all parts of the globe have experienced the above changes in a uniform way and in some cases the specific context of emerging market nations has resulted in customised responses. The impact of technological development is increasingly evident in emerging market nations, such as those in Africa. For example, the adoption of cell phone technology has been widespread in countries such as Nigeria and Kenya. In these countries, rather than replacing the traditional provision of landline telephone systems, the disruptive technology mass uptake of mobile communication has circumvented the need for traditional technologies in the form of landline infrastructure provision. This has implications for employment in traditional sectors, but also for new/alternative employment creation with new skills sets required in the development and application and training in new technologies. It represents a potential area for research on the changing nature of work in the African emerging market context.

Mobile communication technologies have provided enhanced access to communication at low cost to individuals, and have also reduced the imperative for the state to provide landline infrastructure. There are also examples of where mobile communication technology has been adapted to the specific context of emerging markets. A Kenyan company, M-Pesa, has developed an innovative money transfer system relying on cell phone use. In both mature and emerging market retailing, internet purchasing has had a significant impact on traditional store purchasing and an attendant impact on the employment structure of labour markets, with shifting demand for different skills as others become obsolete. Traditional retail store employment has been under threat in mature markets as consumers source goods and services directly through e-retail firms such as e-Bay, Amazon and others. This can on the other hand create alternative labour markets in large warehousing, often using just-in time (JIT) methods, dispatching goods and providing services directly to consumers. In emerging markets, such as South Africa and India, employment in call centres provides customer services and advice to customers anywhere, rather than being location bound employment for this purpose.

Emerging markets have also experienced increased competitive pressures in different ways. The search for reduced labour costs across the globe has impacted them in particular ways as economies develop. For example, in previous decades, the shift of traditional manufacturing jobs from high labour cost countries to low labour cost countries, such as China and India, was a common narrative (van Liemt, 1992). However, labour costs in several of these large emerging markets have increased significantly as their economies have liberalised, with high levels of GDP growth (e.g. over 7% in China and India until recently). Notwithstanding, the rising purchasing power and labour costs and increased middle class populations in emerging markets including more African countries, Western firms and other EMMNCs have sought to relocate certain forms of production to countries which offer further labour cost and labour standards reductions. It is noteworthy that China has become the largest foreign direct

investor in Africa (Schneidman 2007). Overall, labour market supply chains have become more flexible and fluid, almost amoeba-like, as work processes shift from mature markets to emerging markets and sometimes also back again with 'in-shoring' being utilised.

There is, however, a paucity of evidence about changing attitudes to workplace change in African countries. In the context of the notion of an Afro-Asian nexus, some studies focus on employment values and cultural synergies between attitudes and values such as Chinese Confucianism and African 'Ubuntu' in Chinese EMMNCs (Jackson 2014, Kamoche et al 2012). These studies consider attitudes to work based on collectivism/familiasm, particularism and paternalism and also looks at the nature of employment in Chinese organisations. In a systematic review of the literature Horwitz (2014) found that comparative context is an important mediating variable in respect of varying attitudes to work and HRM practice diffusion. There are a number of studies focussing on indigenous thought systems and the work context. See for example April and Shockley (2007), Booysen (2007), Jackson et al (2013), Kamoche (2013), Kamoche et al (2004), Jain et al (2012) and Mangaliso (2001). Most of these analyses focus on diversity, cultural factors and employment equity issues. Their argument is that a combination of cultural values, institutional context affects workplace values and attitudes. Horwitz's (2014) systematic review also found that data were drawn mostly from case studies, questionnaire surveys, semi-structured interviews and other qualitative research methods, with a small number using triangulated research methodologies and secondary data. See for Example the compilation of work by Newenham-Kahindi, Kamoche, Chizema and Mellahi (2013) and Horwitz (2013). Magoola and Horwitz (2010) using triangulation methods to assess employee perceptions of performance management systems in local and MNC organisations. Allen et al (2001) and Horwitz and Smith (1998) also assessed attitudes to flexible work practices using Blyton's typology and found distinctions between local firms and MNCs. Further studies including Jackson (2014) mentioned above, Geren 2010, Wood et al (2011), and Wood and Brewster (2007) consider reactions to Chinese multinational employment practices and negative perceptions regarding below living level wages and poor employment conditions characterising traditional Fordist work practices. These practices would not in general constitute significant new technology-driven disruptions in work organisations and attitudes towards them. This latter issue constitutes a potentially instructive research opportunity.

Emerging market multinational companies (EMMNCs) often have their own distinctive organisational cultures and brands, including SABMiller, Naspers the South African media company, with successful strategic partnerships with Chinese and Russian internet firms. Their often context specific or idiosyncratic cultures result in different ways of managing people and different human resource practices, diffusing from their home countries to other markets they increasingly operate in. Importantly, this impacts on the diffusion of employment and HR practices in a much more organic and fluid way. Cross cultural research on workplace change in organisations in Africa has underlined the need for an in-depth appreciation of the historical, cross-cultural and power influences in the labour markets (Jackson et al 2013, Jackson 2004). The significance of stakeholder perspectives and sensitivity to the notion that business organisations in Africa reflect hybrid organisations

forms. However, the traditional dichotomy of a developed versus developing economy paradigm has been found to be an over-simplification, given the complexity and diversity of organisations and their labour markets. The effective management of cross-cultural relations reflects considerable diversity and stakeholder interests. This has been found to be a particular feature of change in larger organisations in Africa (Jackson et al 2013). Cross-cultural theory, according to Jackson (2004, op cit p.3), suggests that cultural diversity and complexity and their dynamic processes contain both integrating and disintegrating factors; and the need to understand them requires consideration by firms of a stakeholder perspective, rather than a simple shareholder value paradigm.

How these developments have been experienced and how they have affected the organisation of work is the focus of this article. We now move to assess the available evidence and provide an analysis of practices pertaining to the changing nature of work and the drivers of this, and the changes to the way in which labour is managed, such as flexible work and talent attraction and retention in African EMMNCs, using data from existing published research. The analysis considers relevant conceptual underpinnings of work organisation, HRM practice and organisational responses. It is posited that these changes suggest neither an evolution nor a profound revolution in the nature of work. The continuity or nexus between the past and future, present important questions for the management of organisational and work transitions in emerging market MNCs.

Developments in work context and organisation emerging market MNCs

Employer Approaches – Contextual variation

Just as geography matters for products and services, it also matters for labor markets and the way in which labour is managed, given the different regulatory regimes and employment laws in countries around the world and the different business systems in which they operate (Hall and Soskice, 2001; Whitley, 1999, 2008). By respecting local values and tastes and rooting themselves in a community, employers with global brands can broaden their appeal and build trust with consumers and employees (Quelch and Jocz op cit, pp.20-22). Both employees and consumers have connections to place and this explains why the concept of ‘new localism’ is evidenced in case examples such as Pepsi which puts much effort into building relationships with local communities (Kotkin, 2009). Investing in local employees has been a key facet of the strategies of highly successful Southern African EMMNCs like SABMiller, Naspers-Tencent and India’s Tata Group.

Wocke, Bendixen and Rijamampianina’s (2007: 829) study of four South African EMMNCs, namely Nando’s International (fast foods), Sasol (synthetic fuels and chemicals), SABMiller (beer) and MTN International (ICT) concludes that ‘focus on implementation of corporate HR strategies from the parent’s perspective shows that MNCs differ in (1) scope and level of abstraction of their corporate HR strategies, primarily due to differing business models (emphasizing global integration or local market responsiveness); (2) the need to accommodate national culture (from limited to very high levels of adaptation); (3) type and role of organizational culture, often transferred by deployment of expatriates in the MNC,

which variously impacts on the level of convergence of HR practices, and (4) degree of convergence of international HRM practices.

Recent comparative IHRM research has examined approaches of EMMNCs to the way in which work is managed and organised, particularly in the Afro-Asian context (Jackson et al 2013, Wocke et al 2007, Horwitz et al 2006, and Horwitz, 2012 and 2014). These studies also conclude that it is important to identify implementation factors, such as the extent to which HRM is introduced (1) “as is” – transplanted intact cross-culturally, or (2) with some adaptation to local culture and factors such as labour relations institutions, or (3) whether these practices need to be significantly transformed because of local exigencies and (4) the nature and degree of convergence which may occur. Strategies may vary greatly with differing demands in the global environment. Conflicting demands may occur as emerging market MNCs attempt to enhance their capacity to be locally responsive, while also maintaining influence over global corporate structures for example by fostering a global corporate culture with associated human resource practices (Horwitz and Mellahi 2009).

Research proposition 1

It is proposed that firm specific practices are subject to complex contextually specific factors. These include variables of cultural diversity, organizational and regulatory complexity and market factors and the strategic intent or agency of the MNC itself. Wocke et al’s (2007) study found a range in the extent of convergence of international HRM practices from high convergence (Sasol) to low convergence with evidence of ‘cross-vergence’ in Nando’s Fast Foods. (op cit: 840-841). Their research also shows some measure of support for the construct of ‘cultural distance’, where implementation of HRM practices from parent to host country may vary inter alia, because of deep cultural differences. Following Wocke et al (2007) above, cultural context factors may also limit, or assist the adoption of HRM practices, such as performance related pay and merit promotion, where deference to seniority, service and age remain important in countries where family control of large enterprises remains strong (e.g. chaebols in South Korea, Malawian firms in Africa). In contrast, meritocratic values and individual goal orientation evident in Singapore (Chew and Horwitz 2004), Hong Kong and to a slightly lesser degree in South Africa, would permit greater flexibility in adopting performance appraisal, merit pay and promotion, and financial incentive schemes.

1. Patterns of change in the way in which work is managed and organized are neither linear nor homogenous, but contextually idiosyncratic.

It is noteworthy that within a country and national cultural context, variation between MNC and local firm propensity to adopt HRM occurs. ‘Slicing’ their data between South African and MNC firms, Horwitz and Smith (1998, p. 590) found that foreign MNCs used forms of flexibility, such as outsourcing and sub-contracting to a larger extent than South African owned multinational firms. Likewise, use of flexible forms of work organization including functional flexibility, multi-skilling and performance based pay was more common in MNCs

than in local firms (Horwitz and Smith, 1998: 590-606). However, MNC influence may extend beyond HRM. In Engen South Africa, a large petroleum company, its former owner Petronas of Malaysia had key Malaysian staff members in the South African operation's strategic planning department, responsible for charting the future direction of the company. This supports the proposition that MNC influence on global integration and work practice standardization may reveal cross cultural convergence of HRM practices within MNCs through adoption of 'best global practice', compared with a higher degree of divergence in local firms. These findings are consistent with Wocke et al (2007) and relate to both home country and off-shore work norms and practices. For example, job evaluation systems and work process redesign are increasingly important facets of HR work in African MNCs. Research shows that although Western MNC HRM practices have prevailed for decades in African countries, more recently there has been an increase in firms adopting Japanese and east Asian practices (Horwitz, Kamoche and Chew 2002; Horwitz, 2012, pp. 2940-2945). This is evident in the use of Japanese lean manufacturing techniques, just-in-time methods and other operations management tools to reduce product defects, stock holdings, inventory and waste (Toyota and Nissan which have assembly plants in South Africa). The use of these tools has also increased in the manufacturing sector where firms have introduced kaizen, Kanban work organization methods, Nissan type green areas, Toyota Total Quality Management (TQM) and production systems and quality improvement teams. Quality and productivity improvement measures have sought to benchmark international standards in South African hospitality MNC's, the Sun International and Protea Hotel Groups.

Employment relations and HRM implications

An allied issue is the widespread move towards labour market flexibility and an increase in sub-contracting and outsourcing as work is externalised; this notwithstanding regulatory and institutional provisions in local contexts. The dual labour market with work casualization or informalisation of a second tier labour market, is increasing evident even in countries with more regulated labour markets such as South Africa. Numerical and temporal flexibility and even pay flexibility have a profound effect on employment security, the psychological contract and work place arrangements. Nevertheless two-tier labor markets are likely to continue to exist in emerging markets characterized by high earnings differentials, such as Brazil, China, Nigeria and South Africa which have the four highest Gini coefficients in the global economy (Economist, January 26, 2013, p.53). However, sustained high economic growth in emerging markets and their EMMNCs, increased domestic consumption and prospective or concomitant social development and service delivery are dependent on the ability to develop requisite skills in domestic markets, motivate people and retain scarce skills.

Research proposition 2

Changing approaches to the management and organization of work, with moves towards greater adoption of flexible and non-standard work organization, have been found (Allen et al 2001). However, in a comparative study of flexible work organization in Australia, New

Zealand and South Africa, these practices were less common in South Africa (under 10%), in comparison to the use of cost driven practices such as downsizing and outsourcing, and gaining greater flexibility by use of part-time, temporary, casual and short term contracts (Allen et al 2001). Job evaluation, performance management systems and work process redesign are increasingly important facets of the way in which work is managed in EMNCs. Increasingly the ideas of lean thinking and flexible work organisation have gained currency in firms such as Bell Equipment, Nampak Packaging and SABMiller. In terms of diffusion of work practices, EMMNCs research shows what Judge et al (2009) describe as an 'organizational capacity for change' in transitional economies. These findings are also consistent with Wocke et al (2007).

2. Flexible work practices are more prevalent in EMMNCs than in local firms in comparable sectors.

Labour market and human resource effects of MNC investments are increasingly studied. Researchers such as Adisu et al (2010), Bhorat (2007), Hanson (2008) and Kaplinsky et al (2007) critically evaluate these issues. They found evidence of adverse impacts on wage levels, employment and skills transfer to the local population. An example is where such trade and investment squeezes local domestic markets and competition in external markets from export oriented MNCs with cheap products and pricing structures which adversely affect local competitiveness; this given the considerably larger production base and economies of scale of MNCs from countries like China. A further variable, in addition to these economies of scale and lower pricing, is the associated lower production costs including the cost of labour (Tull, 2006; and various articles in the South African Labour Bulletin for example). Using case studies and other qualitative methods, a second area of research considers impacts on local trade unions and domestic firms arising from implementation of alternative forms of work organisation such as flexible work (Horwitz & Smith 1998, Wood et al 2011, Scheidman 2007). These analyses are augmented by work dealing with 'harmful impacts', such as the state of trade unions and employment losses affected by foreign direct investment in industries like clothing, textiles and oil; and the impact of the AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act published in the US) on preferential access for certain African exports effects on employment and working conditions (Power, 2008). This has been followed by trade and investment agreements with the BRICS countries.

In South Africa the number of bargaining councils (centralized industry/sector level collective bargaining) has declined to less than 80, as employers withdraw from them, favouring plant or enterprise bargaining and increased workplace flexibility. This has occurred, for example, in the building and construction industries as new forms of work organisation and employment emphasising flexibility using independent sub-contractors, outsourcing, part-time and temporary work and increased casualization and informalisation of work (Horwitz 2014) have emerged. Changes in labour market policy and work structures have occurred, with both the State and employers either promoting or turning a blind eye to ineffective monitoring of legislative protections and collective agreements; this as increased

cost reduction and flexibility is sought, with a consequent deterioration in employment standards, social protection and rising casualization in the labour market. Examples include the decline of regional centralised bargaining structures in the building and construction industry in South Africa. Over 60 000 retrenchments have occurred in the clothing industry, largely due to cheap imports from lower cost producers in Asia and Chinese and Taiwanese manufacturers in Southern Africa, paying below the legal minimum wage. The South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (Sactwu) has struggled to fight this trend, but has recently persuaded government to successfully negotiate some import restrictions on Chinese clothing to try and preserve jobs. These industry examples reflect the increasingly precarious nature of employment and flexible labour market.

Even with a strongly protective Labour Relations Act (1995) institutionalised Labour Court and Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), as well as minimum standards legislation in the form of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1997), and arguably the strongest union movement on the continent, precarious, non-standard work has increased while formal standard work has declined. As in China, the government has sought to limit the scope of employment agencies and provide increased protections for part-time workers. These practices are associated with a recent decline in private sector union density of some 20% and some evidence of deterioration in employment standards in certain sectors. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1998) however, provides for establishing minimum standards of employment. These conditions cover areas from the designation of working hours, to termination regulations and have been extended to farm and domestic workers. Work days lost through strike action have also declined since 1994. Whilst under apartheid African unions fought for fair labour practices, worker rights and better pay and conditions of employment, they also were at the forefront of the struggle for political rights. Once political and labour rights complemented each other in the first democratic elections in 1994, this labour paradox was resolved. This resulted in an intense policy debate within the union movement as to its repositioning in the new SA. The workplace as an arena for political struggle has largely been replaced with an emphasis on measures to try and preserve employment and HR issues such as training and development and employment equity (Horwitz 2014, Horwitz et al 2004). The Labour Relations Act seeks to promote employee participation in decision making through workplace forums and employee consultation and joint decision making on certain issues. New forms of dispute resolution were developed in the mid-2000s to include pre-dismissal arbitration and one stop dispute resolution known as CON-ARB. Both unions and management have the power to request the CCMA to facilitate retrenchment negotiations to achieve constructive outcomes.

A detailed assessment of employment relations in Africa, using multiple research methods, was published in a special edition of *Employee Relations* edited by Geoff Wood (2008). Both thematic and country analyses were made, although only some of this work explicitly evaluates employment relations and HRM in a MNC context. The latter work includes that by Fashoyin (2008) on Zambia, Mogalakwe (2008) on a 'labour aristocracy' in Botswana and Simelane (2008) on Swaziland's textile industry. This work critically assesses the general

state of research on employment relations in Africa, considering the paucity of research a concern.

Research Proposition 3

Lane and Myant (2007) and Lane and Wood (2009) observe that emerging economies are not homogenous and are indeed diverse and pluralist in their political economies and cultures. This perspective is similar to the work of Bosch et al (2010: 137), Goyer (2011), Kelly and Frege (2004:183) who argue that actual workplace behaviour, behaviour change, choice or agency of actors within institutions. Further research regarding workplace employment relations is required, since much of the literature on labour markets and employment in African economies is macro- regulatory oriented, such as on the impacts of labour regulation and employment law. However, workplace employment relations, including case studies and comparative practice in MNCs, are less well researched, particularly regarding the effects of change in work organisation on individual attitudes-.

A further criticism of work practices of EMMNCs in Africa is a lack of knowledge and skills transfer from foreign MNCs to the local work force, with little positive effects on HR development. These impacts have occurred in Ghana, Ethiopia, Sudan, Namibia and Angola (Alden and Viera 2005; Akorsu and Cooke 2011). Cheap imported and manufactured clothing and textiles have forced closure or take-over of local firms in South Africa. Adverse effects on employment standards have been found where long hours of work, pay below minimum regulatory wages and undercutting local pay rates have reduced employment with little pressure from the host country such as China and India (Akorsu and Cooke Ibid, 2011). This forms a further argument regarding the relative strength, or weakness of local institutions and regulatory regimes pertaining to work organization discussed earlier.

3. There are comparative differences, either positively or negatively, between employee perceptions of the efficacy of work organisation in EMMNCs from different jurisdictions.

African organizations tend to emphasize collective and procedural relations, whereas Asian MNCs have more distinctive, often diffused, HRM practices based variously on group cohesion, individual relations and in the case of Chinese and Taiwanese clothing and textile firms, low-cost work and employment practices; this is especially so with the recent growing influence of Chinese state-run enterprises and Taiwanese MNCs in other emerging markets in Africa, such as Angola, Sudan and South Africa. It appears that the adoption of Asian forms of work organization in southern African firms derives from both increased investment and consequent influence these firms have in Africa. Whilst there are indeed some similarities between African and east Asian cultures, there are also fundamental differences between them and variations in approaches to employment relations and work organisation. Mediating contextual factors in the adoption of HRM have been found in African countries. Managing diversity, job design, training and development, and performance management seem to be dominant HRM functional areas, driving the agendas of both local and MNC firms.

Managerial styles reflect organizational and national cultural patterns. In South Africa, whilst achievement is valued, group and organization conformity is also important.

There is often a latent assumption in employment relations management of both homogeneity and unique distinctiveness, which obfuscates the reality of inter-regional, inter-country and inter-ethnic diversity. Although globalisation and global labour arbitrage that saw companies relocating operations abroad is declining, growth strategies of emerging market firms themselves has seen many become major players and investors in foreign markets, such as Tata Corporation in the UK, African EMMCs such as SABMiller, as well as Chinese investment, especially in the commodities sector in African countries such as Angola, Botswana and Tanzania. The diffusion of their employment and human resource practices is not uncontroversial, as minimum employment standards and worker rights are variable in these firms. Emerging markets need to compete, not only on labour costs, but also on increasing work motivation of employees, skills development and training, efficient, flexible forms of work organisation and realistic labour market regulation.

Research Proposition 4

The motives for the introduction of new forms of work organisation by EMMNCs are driven primarily by economic motives to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

Skills Development, talent management and professional work

Comparative research in South African and Ugandan organizations identifies the need for a much higher level of ‘performance literacy’, at both organisational and public policy levels (Magoola and Horwitz, 2010). A triangulated research study of South African Breweries, the Rand Water Board and Uganda Revenue authority identified the following key success factors for raising ‘performance literacy’ and work process improvement in African organizations:

(1) organizational member alignment: diffusion of performance management knowledge and skill (2) mechanisms or processes for organizational and individual learning (3) Participative and effective maintenance of performance management systems (4) Enabling institutional/regulatory mechanisms in both intra and pan-African diffusion of performance management processes. (Frequently absent or poorly developed in African countries reflecting a significant barrier to effective performance management).

Changing occupational structures are a consequence of the rise and fall of certain industries, fewer manual workers in traditional manufacturing sectors and more white-collar knowledge workers in others (Coats 2009). Arguably this trend is also occurring in rapid growth emerging markets including South Africa. Associated with these developments is the notion of flexible work organization such as increased part-time and temporary work, and as discussed earlier, the profound impact of digital technology on the nature of work. Structural changes have always been part of the changing nature of work, given the globalization

particularly of information communication and shifting patterns of production and supply chains. This is consistent with Kelliher and Richardson (2012 op cit. p.7) in respect of knowledge worker retention and management.

A study of some 20 global companies to identify factors that differentiate successful firms in emerging markets, who are able to attract and retain talent, found four key attributes that go beyond salary and bonuses. These include: (1) company brand reputation, (2) internal opportunities in the firm, (3) a purpose beyond profit (companies such as Novartis, Standard Charter Bank in Africa and China and Tata Corporation), and (4) a continuous growth culture (Ready, Hill and Conger, 2008). These factors are consistent with other findings in changing values to work in knowledge intensive firms in emerging markets (Horwitz and Mellahi, 2009 and Horwitz et al, 2006).

These studies underline a degree of convergence in work expectations especially amongst professional and managerial employees in emerging and mature labor markets and in contrast to the more traditional instrumental attitudes to work considered as prevalent until more recently. In the African context, poor knowledge and education about the opportunities for technical training, together with perceptions that artisan and technical work is somehow of a lesser status to graduate qualifications, continue. While improving the supply side production of graduates, technicians, artisans and health care professionals, through the education system in emerging markets is critical, the challenge for businesses is in attracting, motivating and retaining this intellectual capital. Certain similarities occur in respect to knowledge worker expectations of the nature of work and work organisation. Similar to findings in developed mature markets, research in environments of uncertainty, complexity and ‘unknowability of transitional economies’, shows that professional workers at high skill levels in knowledge intensive industries rate the following as critical to work motivation, effective utilization and retention (Horwitz et al 2006, Judge et al 2009: 1746, Sutherland 2006). Based on these findings we posit below a typology of talent management factors in transitional economy work contexts:

- organizational capacity or ‘readiness’ for change and resilience – a ‘meta-capability’
- emergent strategies- adaptiveness rather than robust organizations (Judge et al, 2009: 1741)
- opportunity to plan and control work which is challenging and demanding
- an ‘engaging’ culture with direct communications, collegial peer and boss relations and ‘decent work’.
- Human resource development, and in certain firms - flexible remuneration.

Source: adapted from Horwitz & Mellahi (2009).

Research Proposition 5

As positive indications of economic growth continue in several African countries, concomitant social development and service delivery is clearly dependent on an ability to motivate and retain scarce skills; given the shortage of specialized and professional skills. Getting to this point though begins with understanding and addressing the needs of knowledge and professional workers with scarce skills, including market-related pay and benefits; intrinsic factors such as job satisfaction and peer group relations, recognition and reward; personal and professional development and doing work at the leading edge in an industry or sector; (Horwitz and Mellahi, 2009: 273). Talent management research in South African shows that professionals in knowledge intensive firms rate the opportunity to plan and control their own work, challenging and stimulating work, sound workplace relations, work-life balance, personal development and growth more highly than remuneration (Horwitz, et al 2006). This is not only about attracting and developing local talent, it also concerns engaging constructively and playing a developmental role in local communities and enhancing local representation in governance structures of the EMMNC in the countries it operates in. MTN the South African based telecommunications company is an example of these practices in its operations in Nigeria (White, 2012 op cit., p.18).

- 5. Even where unemployment is high, it is posited that this shift towards ‘existential needs’ (Maslow, 1943) or ‘intrinsic motivation needs’ (Herzberg et al, 1957) is an important feature of the changing way in which employees are managed in emerging markets. MNCs.**

Cultural and institutional factors

Cultural context is also important in the sense that Confucian ‘Guanxi’ social networks and African ‘Ubuntu’ indicate that personal identity is developed in a social and community context. As noted above, China has been the single biggest foreign investor in Africa over the past decade. Although their main interest is in Africa’s commodity resources, Chinese firms in several countries have made tangible investments in developing local infrastructure and resources such as roads and medical facilities. The management of labour in the past decade has been characterized by a so-called ‘war for talent’ which is not restricted to mature market economies, or BRICS countries, but is also evident in other large emerging markets, such as Indonesia. An increasing level of labour mobility in countries with high economic growth such as Africa, China, India, South-East Asia, Dubai and other Middle East emerging markets reflects increased demand for knowledge worker talent at premium wages.

A conceptual perspective within which an Afro-Asian context can be framed is that posited by Jackson (2004:20-22) - a typology of western instrumentalism and African humanism and east-Asian attributes as a useful analytical framework. The latter concept reflects values such

as sharing, adherence to social obligations, collective trust, deference to rank and seniority, sanctity of commitment and good social and personal relations. As discussed above, these arguably reflect a conceptual proximity to Confucian humanism and Chinese Guanxi, with social cohesion and cooperative rather than adversarial and competitive relations. However, there is a danger in presenting both African and east Asian systems in this way. An unrealistic, idealized or indeed romanticized conception may not have significant empirical or managerial support.

Research proposition 6

A purely market driven approach to skills and talent development is not however likely to be effective in emerging market MNCs. The notion of a developmental state occurring in emerging markets such as South Africa, committed to developing the country's human resources in joined up partnerships with the private sector and organized labour, could remove the many constraints to international competitiveness, such as skills development and better education (Soko 2007). Cross-cultural variation in the labour market and skills supply for addressing market needs is an important consideration by EMMNCs in the decision regarding their own foreign direct investment (FDI). An MNC seeking a low wage, low-skill host country for low cost, labour-intensive work may seek to invest in CIVETS economies with these features. Most African countries have regional economies with an oversupply of manual, relatively unskilled workers, and dualistically a shortage of artisan, technical, financial and managerial skills. In South Africa this was exacerbated by the apartheid legacies, which until recently deliberately reserved access to skilled work on a racial basis. Migrancy and the flight of knowledge workers from Africa, or between African countries, is becoming critical as more African countries seek to attract, develop and retain key skills to grow their economies and compete both domestically and globally. In Africa, the main labour-receiving countries are Botswana, Mauritius and South Africa.

- 6. The 'war for talent' and the associated work and HR practices for attracting and retaining talent may well show increasing convergence, even in the context of strong idiosyncratic and contextual institutional and cultural factors.**

Discussion

The above analysis suggests that there is considerable potential for further research and posits six research propositions for further empirical investigation. In terms of knowledge from research evidence presented in previous sections, it is appropriate to evaluate potential implications for theory, research and practice. Changes in the world of work have prompted new approaches to the management of work and in some cases involved new forms of organisation. Organisations seek to move from command and control managerial approaches with mechanistic, hierarchical structures and narrow job definitions, characteristic of a stable environment, to more flexible, organic structures, allowing greater agility and more rapid response to changing environments. This article has identified developments and patterns of

response by MNCs operating in emerging markets. For any organisation seeking investment opportunities in African countries, it is important to understand how the approach to managing and organising work has changed, the cross-cultural complexity and variation, the role of regulation by institutional and legislative regimes and the extent of agency or independence which an MNC might have in transferring headquarters work practices into another context.

This new environment in emerging markets is characterised by on-going change, complexity, uncertainty and variation. Organisations thus need a different set of competencies at all levels to navigate these changes. The impact of technology, product obsolescence and increased competition are probably the most significant factors in how work and the requisite skills needed for effective performance have changed. Understanding organisational culture and diversity, and institutional environment can assist decision making in turbulent markets and times of uncertainty, and complexity, features which characterise emerging markets and the firms. This is no less important in EMMCs given the diverse and complex environments they operate in.

This analysis also suggests further research about the way in which firms in emerging markets have experienced changes in the world of work and responded to them is needed. Organisational agility and the use of flexible work practices seem to be key attributes of modern work organisations. How to achieve organisational agility through HRM practices in turbulent times and in transitional economies is receiving increased attention (Nijssen and Paauwe, 2012). This involves ‘dynamic capabilities’ of organisations, continuous organisation adaptation, and readiness to reconfigure and transform strategy, structure, workplace skills and processes, capacity and workforce scalability. These reflect the capacity of an organisation to keep its human resources aligned with business needs (Nijssen and Paauwe, 2012, op cit. pp.3317-3318). This also requires a capacity to consistently create, adapt distribute and apply knowledge (Nijssen and Paauwe, 2012, p.3319). However, the potential risk of such organisational agility is a potential loss of knowledge as people configurations constantly change, for example headcounts, skills mix and patterns of deployment.

Flexible labour market practices in EMMNCs include the use of (1) functional flexibility, including multiskilling, job rotation; (2) numerical flexibility – variation of staffing types and levels, (3) temporal flexibility such as part-time and temporary work and (4) pay flexibility for example, performance related variable pay (Blyton and Lucio, 1995, Allan et al, 2001). However, the prevalence of these practices and organisational types is unclear and these practices may be packaged in part and in different ways using various forms of flexibility. Traditional ‘Fordist’ organisational types are characterised by predictability and stability, or relatively slow, incremental change, in part because of an inflexible mass production industry type providing relative employment security. However, even in these sectors flexible practices and agile structures have (in the auto industry for example), been adopted, as these organisations fight to compete and survive.

In recent decades the response of large multinational firms to this increased competition was often to seek cheap labour in low wage emerging markets with abundant labour supply. Yet organisational change and responses to the changing world of work should not be oversimplified. From an agency perspective, firms often respond in quite individual ways seeking to make distinctive strategic choices. Further research is therefore needed on individual firm level HR strategies in emerging markets and EMMNCs and how new forms of managing and organising work are developed, adopted and transferred. It is posited that various forms of work organisation including flexible work practices will not be implemented in a bundle, or in combination, given variation in regulatory and institutional contexts and cross-cultural diversity in EMMNCs and the trans-national environments they operate in. Hence Jackson's (2004) conclusion that the management of change will continue to also require a deep knowledge and understanding of cross-cultural diversity, notwithstanding converging and diffusing shifts in managerial and HRM practice. This is consistent with Quelch and Jocz (2012 op cit. pp. 1-7) and their notion that 'all business is local'.

Research is also needed on the outcomes of different approaches to managing and organising work for employees and what this may mean for well-being and job satisfaction. This raises potentially important questions about job quality in changing labour markets (Coats, 2009, op cit. pp.118-119). Similarly Kelliher and Richardson (2012, op cit. pp. 180-182) note the diversity of organisational responses to new forms of work organisation. They refer to a 'darker side' of new forms of work organisation, with adverse consequences for individual well-being and identity, achieving a satisfactory work-life balance, especially for home and flexi-workers and competing managerial priorities. Increased connectivity brings new and diverse pressures and increased job and time demands; this in contrast to the normative espousal of largely positive outcomes in the practitioner literature.

There has been a significant growth in temporary, interim and part-time labour markets in emerging markets, including the BRICS countries of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. One key concern is under these circumstances where does the responsibility for developing skills and competencies lie if human resource development is outsourced? This may at one level be part of a formal contract, or partnership with independent HRD organisations for example business schools, consultancy firms, sector training authorities (such as in South Africa) and labour suppliers and agencies – if this is the case. Alternatively the broader societal responsibility for skills development is increasingly individualised, as was argued earlier in this paper. Obviating red tape of labour regulation is clearly also a motive and this has indeed been found to be a factor for the rise in part-time or temporal flexibility in BRICS countries and their EMMNCs (Horwitz 2013). Drucker argued over a decade ago that 'the traditional work force serves the organisation system. In a knowledge intensive work system, the system might come to serve the worker' (op cit. p. 7). That said there are complex and often two dual labour markets at work in emerging markets. Traditional command and control mass production factories, such as footwear, clothing and textiles as in China, will still continue to be the major employers. However, they too will

experience similar pressures to those experienced in mature economies as wage costs rise and government regulation impacts on their employment and HR practices.

Furthermore, it seems likely that EMMNC influence on the way in which work is organised and integrated and standardised will foster a shift towards cross cultural convergence of HRM practices within EMMNCs, through adoption of 'best global practice'. This is in contrast with a higher degree of divergence in local firms. It is not therefore clear that the changing nature of work in African EMMNCs can be seen as agency driven through particular strategic choices without considering the complexity of diverse contexts, such as plurality of stakeholder interests including that of the state, foreign MNC influences in respect of management practice, cross-cultural diversity and organisational complexity. These factors, together with varied regulatory environments, underline the importance of multiple perspectives on the nature of work, rather than adopting single theoretical explanations. For example, reliance on purely cross-cultural explanations, without consideration of regulatory and institutional theory and the stakeholder perspective, would be limiting in explanatory value as local-hybrid forms of work organisation become more evident.

This analysis also suggests that rapidly changing technology and easy and instant communications in real time through the Internet, mobile technology and mass social media, work organisation and practice will arguably see increasing convergence and diffusion in EMMNC in emerging markets in Africa and Asia. This development would necessitate highly skilled technologically literate knowledge and professional workers. Those not having these skills could well become a 'left behind', marginalised underclass, and earnings inequalities evident in emerging markets MNCs from Southern Africa will increase.

Nevertheless, it is argued that the domestic and regional institutional and social policy context still matters. Government labour market policies will still affect the conditions and nature of work and regulation of workplace relations, including flexible work practices such as part-time and temporary work. The world is not completely flat as Friedman (2005) might have us believe. Some attempts have been made to regulate flexible work with the European construct of 'flexicurity' – the idea that flexibility and employment security can be reconciled at both policy and enterprise level in countries such as South Africa. Referring to 'dynamic markets' rather than emerging markets, White (2012) argues in this regard that African EMMNCs such as Anglo American and SABMiller have largely retained their corporate culture and relative consistency or standardization of work practices in markets as diverse and far afield as Chile, the Czech Republic, Peru and El Salvador. Corporate culture and its readiness or openness to change underlines the nature of how managerial practice and work organization are defined in successful EMMNCs. From the above analysis the final section below seeks to develop a theoretical framework or model of work organization in emerging markets.

Conclusion – Some observations towards a theoretical model on work organisation in emerging markets

There is an argument that both institutional and cultural factors are relevant in the way in which work is organized in emerging markets, rather than an exclusive analytical reliance on one or the other of these approaches. Effective diffusion of these practices indeed requires sensitivity to cultural context (Jackson 2004). The two approaches can, however, be viewed as complementary (Sorge 2004, Kazlauskaite et al 2013). Sparrow and Hiltrop (1997) identify four interrelated sets of factors which account for differences in national patterns of HRM and work organization: HR role and competence, business structure, institutional variables and cultural factors. It is posited that MNC influence on global integration and work practice standardization, reveals a cross cultural convergence of HRM practices within MNCs, through adoption of 'best global practice'; this in contrast with a higher degree of divergence in local firms. Militating against developing a 'grand theory' is the geo-political diversity and historical institutional context, together with the four factors identified by Sparrow and Hiltrop (1997) as well Sorge (2004).

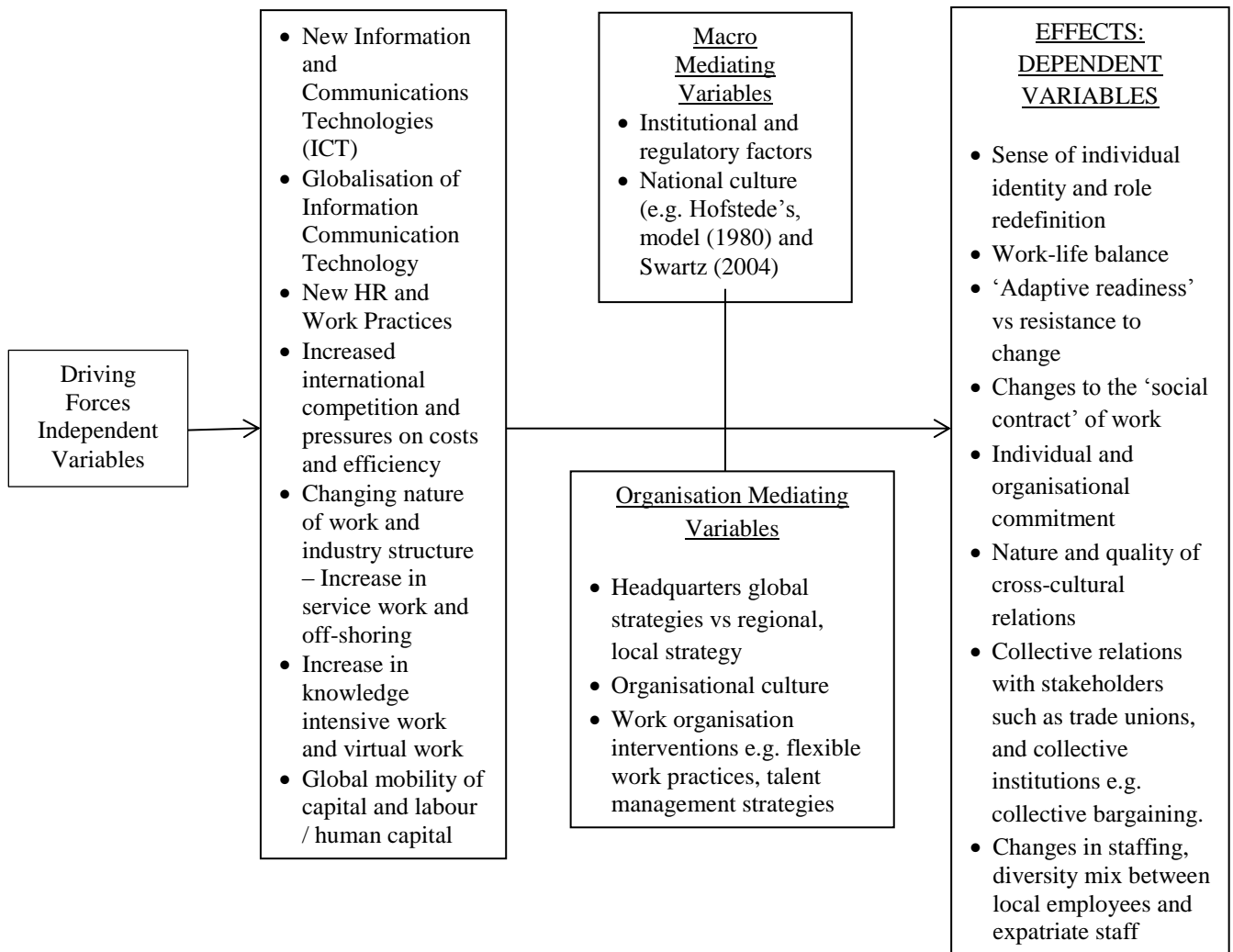
One perspective is that of theory building pertinent to regional or country clusters. Hall and Soskice (2001) posited a dichotomy between liberal and co-ordinated market economies. Other paradigms cluster countries according to national and regional cultural factors (Hofstede 1980, House et al 2004 and Swartz 2004). From a macro or meta-theoretical perspective, there are also core distinctions between a US version of human resources, further refinement or indeed broadening to Anglo-Saxon categories, Germanic states with their co-ordinated market economies and other groups such as Central and Eastern European countries CEEC (Brewster & Mayrhofer (2012). There is also considerable work on a European model of HRM in particular (for example Brewster et al 2012, Brewster et al 2004). Within regional clusters such as CEEC, considerable variation has been found in HRM and work organization practices, with mediating variables of institutional and cultural factors being significant (Parry, Stavrou & Lazarova 2013).

This paper has also argued that independent variables or 'drivers' of new forms of work organization include globalization, information and communications technology (ICT) social change including generational changes, changing employee needs and labour market changes, for example in age profiles of a particular country or regional clusters. The work of Kelliher and Richardson (2012) brings these variables together, identifying structural changes in labour markets, globalization, increased competitive pressures and employer efficiency needs, information and communication technology, social change such as the increase in knowledge work and knowledge workers not only in mature markets, but also in emerging markets.

Theoretically and empirically how the use of different work arrangements become more widespread and embedded in organizations requires more robust theory building and broader investigative research (Kelliher and Richardson op cit., pp. 3-7). However, although research may seek to determine both organisational and individual responses to these independent variables or 'drivers', they seem to find considerable variation and effects in different countries and regions, even where ostensibly regional clusters such as CEECs might reveal

certain historical similarities being transitional economies previously under a planned economy of Soviet rule or South African under Apartheid. Given this complexity and diversity in the area of study, 'mid-range' theory building might be more appropriate than grand or meta-theory seeking. If the aim of theory and research is to enhance understanding and knowledge, then intrinsic to this process is to almost 'factor in' the complexity of new ways of organizing work as an area of study in itself, this given the diversity of stakeholder interests and their changing expectations about the nature of how work should be organised. Following the findings of this analysis, a tentative model of work organisation in context is posited below:

Diagram 1: A ‘mid-range’ Model/typology of Work Organisation



Methodologically, there is also a key question of the ‘relevance’ of theory developed in a particular cultural and institutional context(s) for understanding new ways of working across national contexts. There is an emerging literature on the appropriateness or otherwise of applying Anglo-Saxon models of management and HRM, for example to the complexity and diversity of African economies (Jackson et al 2013, Newenham-Kahindi et al 2012). Dependent variables in research models could potentially include the effects of new forms of work organisation on individuals, their work-life balance and sense of identity, organisational and work commitment; similarly the effects on institutional stakeholders such as trade unions and employment relations institutions such as collective bargaining. The significance of theoretical and empirical findings in respect of relationships between variables such as changing societal norms and expectations and organisational needs to be more critically evaluated (Eikhof and Summers 2012). A poignant question for further analysis is whether even the idea of a mid-range theory relating to work organization in emerging markets is indeed possible, or how/why it might vary in applicability to mature market economies? This begs the question of the complexity and diversity of multiple contexts and their impact on endeavours at broader theory building on work organisation in emerging markets.

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